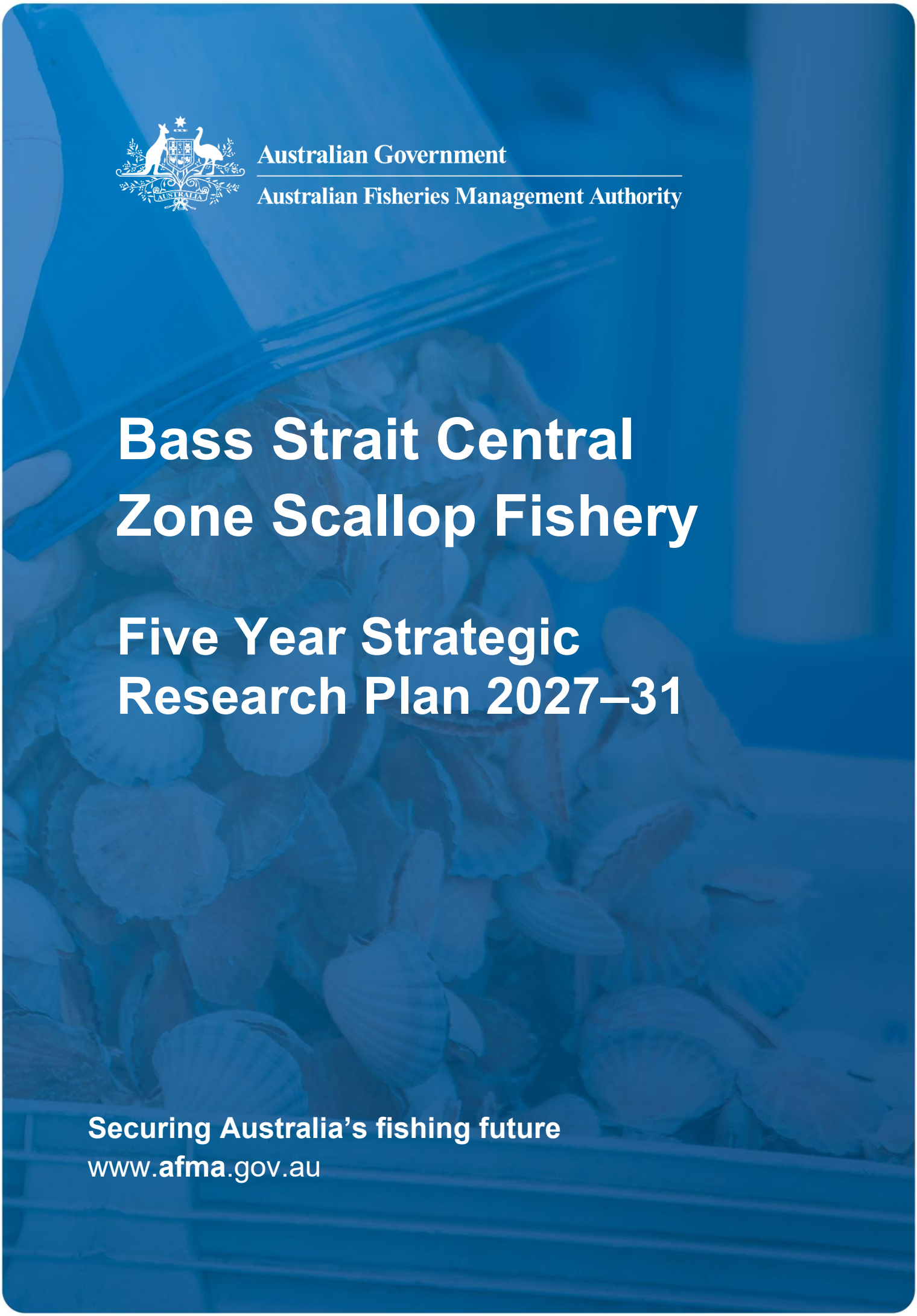


Australian Government
Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery

Five Year Strategic Research Plan 2027–31

Securing Australia's fishing future
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Version	History	Endorsed by
1.0	Replaces the Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery Five Year Strategic Research Plan 2022–26	The Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery Management Advisory Committee (ScallopMAC), 21 August 2026.

Introduction

The *Fisheries Administration Act 1991* specifies that AFMA is to establish priorities in respect of research relating to Commonwealth fisheries and arrange for the undertaking of such research. This is supported by the *Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery Management Plan 2002* (Management Plan) that further specifies that cost-effective and high quality research is carried out in relation to this fishery in accordance with a five-year strategic research plan.

This Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery (BSCZSF) Strategic Research Plan 2027–31 (Strategic Research Plan) was developed by AFMA in consultation with the BSCZSF Resource Assessment Group (ScallopRAG) and the BSCZSF Management Advisory Committee (ScallopMAC) and identifies areas of high priority research for the BSCZSF for the period 2027 to 2031. The purpose of the Strategic Research Plan is to:

- assist with the pursuit of the management objectives for the BSCZSSF, which are consistent with AFMA's objectives; and
- enable the effective implementation and appraisal of management arrangements.

The Strategic Research Plan provides the framework for identifying annual research priorities for the BSCZSF, each of which are to be compiled in an Annual Research Statement for the fishery. The Annual Research Statement should also consider the cost-effectiveness, priority and timeframe for undertaking the work. Where research has already been funded, the Annual Research Statement should identify this, including the source of funding.

The Strategic Research Plan and accompanying Annual Research Statements are used by:

- the AFMA Research Committee (ARC) at its annual August meeting to develop the ARC annual research call made in September.
- the ARC to recommend priorities to the Commonwealth Fisheries Research Advisory Committee (ComRAC) for potential Fisheries Research and Development Committee (FRDC) funding
- FRDC in making its annual call for research expressions of interest.

This Strategic Research Plan aims to address AFMA's strategic research programs in the AFMA Strategic Research Plan 2023–28 outlined below.

Research framework

Roles

Resource Assessment Groups

Each Commonwealth fishery has an associated Resource Assessment Group (RAG). These groups provide advice and recommendations to management advisory committees, AFMA Management, the AFMA Commission and the AFMA Research Committee on the status of fish stocks, byproduct and bycatch species, fishery economics and on the impact of fishing on marine ecosystems and the environment. RAGs also advise on the type of information required for stock assessments.

RAG members include fishery scientists, industry members, fishery economists, AFMA Management and other interest groups. This variety of membership ensures that industry knowledge and developments in management strategies, market prices and the costs of harvesting as well as scientific information are considered when making recommendations.

ScallopRAG provides advice on the BSCZSF. Further information on this group can be found here.

Management Advisory Committees

Each Commonwealth fishery also has an associated Management Advisory Committee (MAC). These committees provide advice to AFMA on biological and economic indicators for fish stocks, byproduct and bycatch species, and on the impacts of fishing on marine ecosystems and the environment.

MAC members are drawn from industry, policy, conservation, state and territory governments, recreational and research fields. Advice provided by MACs must be evidence-based and address biological, economic and wider ecological factors affecting the performance of the fishery. Advice and recommendations from MACs must align with AFMA's pursuit of its legislative objectives.

ScallopMAC provides advice on the BSCZSF and endorses each Five Year Strategic Research Plan for the fishery. Further information on this committee can be found here.

The AFMA Research Committee

The AFMA Research Committee (ARC) considers research priorities that contribute to improved management of Commonwealth fisheries. Specifically, the AFMA Research Committee provides advice to the AFMA Commission and AFMA Management on:

- major fishery and cross fishery research issues affecting Commonwealth fisheries to support AFMA in meeting its objectives and other legislative requirements;
- the outcome of its review of finalised research projects in terms of delivery of outputs and outcomes, adoption/impacts and required adjustment to AFMA processes;
- the strategic directions for research relevant to AFMA's information needs; and,
- priorities for potential funding from AFMA, Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) and other funding sources.

The ARC also supports AFMA's administration of the annual research budget.

The FRDC

The FRDC takes a leading role in planning and investing in fisheries research, development and extension (RD&E) to support the ongoing sustainability of Australian aquatic sectors and ecosystems.

The Corporation is a co-funded partnership between the Australian Government and fisheries and aquaculture. It is a statutory corporation under the *Primary Industries Research and Development Act 1989* and is responsible to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

FRDC plans, invests in and manages RD&E for fishing and aquaculture and the wider community, and encourages the adoption of the resulting knowledge and innovation for impact. It coordinates government and industry investment and works with stakeholders to establish and address their R&D priorities.

In mid-2025, the FRDC released the *FRDC RD&E Plan 2025-2030*. This plan consists of five themes outlined below:

1. Growing, resilient and innovative
2. Best practices and production systems
3. Capable and diverse people
4. Secure access and resource allocation
5. Community trust, acceptance and value.

The AFMA research process

For information on prioritising research, calling for and assessing proposals, please view the ARC timeline here.

AFMA's Strategic Research Plan

AFMA's Strategic Research Plan consists of three research programs, each of which is underpinned by one or more research strategies, outlined below.

Program 1 – Fishery stocks, biology and the marine environment

a. Collect appropriate information to support stock assessments.
b. Explore alternative species assessment methods and models.
c. Assess the impacts of fishing on non-target species and the marine environment.
d. Assess the impact of climate change on Commonwealth fisheries assessment and management

Program 2 – Development

a. Bycatch reduction and development of underutilised fisheries resources
b. Take account of Indigenous, commercial, and recreational interests
c. Develop a coordinated approach on economic issues.
d. Improve and enhance fishery harvest strategies and management framework
e. Management development
f. Compliance methodologies

Program 3 – Evaluation

a. Management indicators

For further information on the above, please refer to the AFMA Strategic Research Plan 2023–28

BSCZSF research priorities 2027–31

Fishery stocks, biology and the marine environment

a. Collect appropriate information to support stock assessments.

- Undertake biomass assessments as required under the BSCZSF Harvest Strategy.
- Quantify the putative impacts of native and introduced sea stars on scallop stocks.

b. Explore alternative species assessment methods and models.

- Investigate alternative tools (e.g. genetic techniques) to monitor scallop abundance/biomass.
- Support work to quantify the extent of available habitat for Commercial Scallop in the BSCZSF and adjacent scallop fisheries.
- Explore the utility of biophysical models in describing/predicting patterns in larval recruitment and growth of Commercial Scallops.

c. Assess the impacts of fishing on non-target species and the marine environment.

- Develop cost-effective approaches to quantify and mitigate fishery interactions with protected and high-risk species (including the estimation of the swept area of the fishery).
- Undertake Ecological Risk Assessments as required.

d. Assess the impact of climate change on Commonwealth fisheries assessment and management

- Expand the use of environmental data loggers (that contribute to the FishSOOP program) within the BSCZSF and promote regular analysis of the data collected.
- Maintain climate and ecosystem reporting for the BSCZSF, including the compilation of recent research on climate change impacts relevant to this fishery.
- Encourage research on the impacts of climate change on the BSCZSF and relevant ecosystem components within the area of this fishery.

Development

a. Bycatch reduction and development of underutilised fisheries resources

- Explore potential improvements in gear efficiency including consideration of precision harvesting techniques, bycatch reduction and handling.
- Support research on the biology of, and market demand for, potential byproduct species such as seastars and Angasi oysters.

b. Take account of Indigenous, commercial, and recreational interests

- Limited applicability for the BSCZSF, as there is minimal overlap with Indigenous, recreational or other commercial fisheries within the area of the BSCZSF.

c. Develop a coordinated approach on economic issues.

- Refine the reporting of economic indicators to assist in the estimation of maximum economic yield for the fishery and inform harvest strategy settings.
- Explore opportunities for increasing sustainable economic returns to the Australian community (such as reducing the gap between the total allowable catch and the realised catch where applicable).

d. Improve and enhance fishery harvest strategies and management framework

- Conduct five-year reviews of the BSCZSF Harvest Strategy (or earlier if required).

e. Management development

- Support work on cost-effective data collection tools.

f. Compliance methodologies

- Develop methodologies that encourage and enhance compliance with the BSCZSF Management Plan and related legal instruments.

Evaluation

a. Management indicators

- Ensure fishery data are of a sufficient quality and quantity to support and evaluate management arrangements.